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SUBJECT: BLACK SEA CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS ROMANIAN EFFORTS
TO DEFINE A REGIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

REF: BUCHAREST 429 (AND PREVIOUS)

Classified By: POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF ROBERT S. GILCHRIST FOR REASONS
1.4 A, B AND D

11. (C) Summary. An April 20 conference on strategic opportunities in the Black Sea region permitted Romanian President Basescu to highlight his view that democratic stability, security, and prosperity in the region depended on Euro-Atlantic cooperation. He also emphasized that Romanian strategic thinking will become less reactive, and in recognition of widespread democratic change, will seek development of more intensive relationships with neighboring states. Basescu's remarks, together with his sponsorship of the conference, reflect his hands-on, highly engaged approach to developing Romania's foreign policy, especially in regard to its immediate neighbors. They also illustrate that Romania is still seeking to define and execute a coherent and comprehensive Black Sea regional strategy. The Embassy Charge d'Affaires emphasized Euro-Atlantic institutions, including NATO, and called for a broader definition of the challenges and opportunities facing the region. Other speakers also evoked the importance of anchoring the region to Euro-Atlantic institutions. On the other hand, two Western European speakers outlined a "Euro-centric" vision that contrasts with Romania's support for a more robust NATO role in the region. End Summary.

12. (SBU) President Basescu delivered the keynote address at an April 20 Bucharest conference on "Black Sea Area and Euro-Atlantic Security: Strategic Opportunities," sponsored by the Romanian Presidency's National Security Department and supported by the U.S., UK, and German Embassies as well as the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies. In his remarks, Basescu stressed that the Black Sea area needs "a real Euro-Atlantic strategy designed to ensure democratic stability, security and prosperity." He also noted that three countries in the Black Sea area are NATO members while others are members of the Partnership for Peace or have developed special relationships with NATO. Basescu, who has repeatedly referred to a "Washington-London-Bucharest axis," dismissed concerns voiced in some Western European quarters that the GOR has moved too close to the U.S. and UK, adding that both countries have a "special interest" in the Black Sea region and that Romania should take advantage of the region's strategic opportunities.

13. (SBU) Basescu pointedly claimed that Romania had now completed its transition to democracy and had now entered into a period of "normalcy". He foreshadowed themes we expect to see in Romania's Defense White Paper shortly, namely * that Romania would no longer be merely a "consumer of security", but would also be a provider. Formulating the idea a little differently, he then said that Romanian strategy would be less reactive, and would instead become more anticipatory of possible threats. Looking at the Black Sea region, he called it vital to Romanian interests, and noted that "our region can no longer be considered on the periphery of Europe, but in the midst of an active geopolitical process." Noting that he is an "optimist," Basescu continued "at the present time the Black Sea zone is, first of all, a zone of strategic opportunities. The principal risk. . .is losing momentum" in dealing with pressing issues. These include "bad governance, frozen conflicts, arms, narcotics and human trafficking, organized crime, and extremist-separatist movements (which) constitute strategic risks for the security of the Euro-Atlantic community."

14. (U) Charge d'Affaires also delivered a keynote address in which he stressed the importance of defining geographic parameters of the somewhat ambiguous "Black Sea region," given that there is no accepted definition of the term. He focused on the importance of adopting a holistic, integrated approach to security, democratization and economic development. He further recommended incremental, tangible steps toward concrete goals, channeling efforts through existing multilateral institutions with proven track records, particularly NATO. The Charge observed that policy makers are increasingly coming to recognize the importance of the Black Sea region, especially given that the end of the Cold War, the spread of democratic institutions and values and increased economic development have increased opportunities

for constructive engagement in the region. He noted that these factors have contributed to a geopolitical reality in which the Black Sea region presents a historical opportunity for multilateral engagement and cooperation.

15. (C) The British Ambassador to Bucharest outlined in general terms the risks facing the region, including trafficking in narcotics, persons, and arms, observing that the "Black Sea must not become a Black hole." The UK envoy also expressed support for extending an "Operation Endeavor type program in the Black Sea." (Note: The British Defense Attache subsequently clarified to PolOff, however, that HMG favors this extension if all littoral states are in accord. End Note.)

A "Euro-Centric" View of Black Sea Security?

16. (C) Two Western European speakers implicitly called into question a major NATO role in the Black Sea region, stressing instead a "Euro-Centric" vision. Norbert Baas, Special Envoy of the German Federal Government for Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, gave a keynote address that stressed the primacy of European institutions and praised BLACKSEAFOR as a "key tool." Baas gave only a brief nod to NATO at the end of his remarks, when he noted that NATO engages in useful dialogue with Russia and Ukraine. One member of the audience later remarked that Baas' remarks contained nary a hint that Romania and Germany are both members of the NATO Alliance.

17. (C) Later in the conference (when two thirds of the participants had already departed), Onno Simons, the Deputy of Head of the European Commission in Bucharest, cited "prevailing tension between European models and non-European models" in the Black Sea region. Simons outlined four EU priorities for the region: addressing hard security issues, including frozen conflicts; solving soft security issues, such as TIP and organized crime; giving proper attention to energy issues; creating a stable trade and investment climate. Simons added that Romania could make a "contribution" to development of an EU security policy, but did not address a NATO role in the region. Marshall Center Professor Detlef Puhl offered a more balanced "European view," opining that a Black Sea strategy should be "inclusive," incorporating a role for NATO as well as compatible with EU issues.

18. (SBU) Other speakers explicitly called for a more robust NATO role in the region (a view strongly endorsed by the GOR). Cristian Istrate, Director General of the MFA's Strategic Policy Division, underscored that the Black Sea area should be "anchored" to Euro-Atlantic institutions and praised the NATO Istanbul Summit's evocation of Black Sea security issues, concluding that regional security cooperation should be "a win-win instead of zero sum game." Bulgarian Ambassador to Romania Konstantin Andreev also evoked the Istanbul Summit Declaration and described the Black Sea region as an "indispensable part of Euro-Atlantic security." Dr. Jeffrey Simon of the National Defense University expressed support for creation of a NATO Black Sea/Caucasus strategy and proposed creation of a NATO "Black Sea Group." Chamber of Deputies Defense Commission President Mihai Stanisoara stated that EU and NATO should jointly create a "strategic umbrella" over the region.

A Diversity of Regional Themes

19. (C) The conference did not have a single focus, but explored in a general fashion a number of themes, including energy issues and the apparent lack of a Black Sea regional identity. It provided a forum for speakers, and participants in the question and answer sessions, to explore diverse themes related to Black Sea security:

- Common challenges: The speakers shared a broad consensus on the principal risks facing the region, including frozen conflicts, economic disparities, uneven democratic development, and trafficking in persons, narcotics, conventional weapons, and WMD. At the same time, speakers generally agreed that a shared commitment to democratic values (albeit in varying degrees throughout the area) bodes well for the development of multilateral solutions to regional challenges.

- Energy: Senior Presidential Adviser and National Liberal Party (PNL) elder statesman Teodor Stolojan underscored early in the conference that "energy security is the key" to the Black Sea Region, a view shared by a number of other speakers. Professor Roger Kangas of the Marshall Center stated that access to energy reserves to the east of the Black Sea littoral is an important element in the region's security.

- Black Sea "Identity": Several speakers questioned whether a "Black Sea identity" exists, with the NDU's Dr. Simon contrasting the historical presence of a "Balkan identity" with the apparent lack of a "regional identity" in the Black Sea area, where frozen conflicts are stumbling blocks to

developing unity. Other speakers, including Professor Kangas, agreed on the lack of regional identity but opined that its absence is not necessarily an impediment to regional thinking.

- "Locally Owned" Solutions: Several speakers stressed the importance of Black Sea littoral states devising and executing solutions for regional problems that reflect a regional consensus - rather than solutions imposed from outside the region. A number of speakers similarly underscored that policy makers should work through existing institutions rather than creating new administrative structures.

- Parliamentary Roles: Romanian Defense Commission President Stanisoara stressed that "parliaments must play a role in contributing to democracy in the region," especially given that "parliamentary dialogue will be necessary to develop a Black Sea identity." He suggested the creation of a "Black Sea Parliamentary Assembly" modeled on the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and concentrating on "confidence and consensus building." Stanisoara, a Basescu ally, later observed enthusiastically to PolMilOff that the area's parliaments could help build a regional identity.

- BLACKSEAFOR: Several speakers gave a cautious "nod" to BLACKSEAFOR. Professor Puhl observed that BLACKSEAFOR has had a slow start, while Dr. Simon noted that the U.S. has "met resistance" to an observer role and that BLACKSEAFOR has been so far limited mostly to "confidence building activities." The Foreign Ministry's Istrate repeated GOR support for BLACKSEAFOR "confidence building mechanisms" and "enhancement of soft security mechanisms." Underlying the discussions about BLACKSEAFOR was an implicit recognition - stated explicitly by some speakers - that Russia should be "fully engaged" in developing regional security strategies. Bulgarian Ambassador Andreev articulated this sentiment when he observed "we need to guarantee constructive engagement of Russia." Several speakers, in addition to the UK envoy, also expressed general support for an activity in the Black Sea similar to "Operation Active Endeavor."

Comment: Romania Seeks to Define Its Regional Role

10. (C) The conference received the full support of President Basescu and reflects the growing importance that Romania places on Black Sea regional security issues. Indeed, President Basescu underscored that importance in a private meeting the day of the conference with Marshall Center Director Dr. John Rose and Embassy ODC Chief. In the course of that meeting, Basescu also observed that Romania does not want Russia to perceive Romania as being "too much of a leader" on Black Sea issues, but that, for the time being, Romania should focus on developing an "organizational role." During a coffee break at the conference, however, a presidential staffer (who took credit for drafting Basescu's keynote address) acknowledged to PolMilOff that the GOR has still failed to achieve a satisfactory level of high-level interagency dialogue and information sharing on Black Sea concerns.

11. (C) While the conference reflected Romania's successful effort to keep the Black Sea on the front burner of NATO and EU discussions about regional security, it also highlighted the divergence between U.S. and Romanian views on one hand and EU (including German) views on the other. As Basescu's speech, and his other public remarks and private conversations, have made clear, Romania continues to consider its strategic alliance with the U.S. and NATO as the lynchpin of its strategic security policy. At the same time, Romanian policy makers, including Basescu, are still groping to define a coherent Black Sea regional policy, and the April 20 conference reflects this ongoing effort. It would be a mistake, however, to view Basescu's attention to Black Sea issues as an isolated phenomenon. Since taking office at the end of last year, Basescu has energetically engaged in the development of a regional foreign policy, illustrated by his visit to Moldova (the first by a Romanian president in half a decade) and lengthy meeting in Bucharest this month with Ukrainian President Yushchenko. Basescu has demonstrated a willingness to "engage" on tough issues, including the conflict in Transnistria, and has not been shy about calling for a larger Romanian role. Romania's emerging regional policy is still a "work in progress," but Basescu appears committed to developing a policy for the Black Sea region that binds Romania even more closely to NATO and the U.S.
End Comment.

12. (U) Amembassy Bucharest's reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNet website:
www.state.gov/p/eur/bucharest.
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